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Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

9th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 25 September 2013, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Address by Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nikolić (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): It is my great honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Republic of Serbia and inform members about the positions held by my country on some important global issues, developments in and around Serbia and the efforts that Belgrade has made with a view to reaching a just solution to problems facing the country and its neighbourhood.

First of all, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session for his excellent stewardship and organization of this debate and the leadership he has demonstrated in his high-level post. I wish him every success in the performance of his duties as President of the General Assembly. I assure him that he will enjoy the support of the Republic of Serbia in the discharge of his mandate. He can count on our assistance in bringing his ideas to fruition.

At the same time, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, former President of the General Assembly, on his courage and impeccable work in presiding over the Assembly for the past year and on the understanding he has demonstrated of the problems encountered all over the world. He represented Serbia in a dignified manner while being an impartial professional of high standing.

The Republic of Serbia attaches great importance to the United Nations and the activities and cooperation carried out within its framework. We remain true to the Charter of the United Nations and the purposes and principles enshrined therein. We will endeavour, to the extent of our ability, to make a contribution to their implementation.

We are also determined to participate in the new initiatives being taken within the United Nations. I welcome the well-chosen theme for this year's session. The post-2015 development agenda and the preparations to be made in order to define a future global development framework are important issues, and the General Assembly is the right forum in which to hold these discussions and, more important, come to agreement on them. I am confident that the current Assembly session will be successful in the consideration of the agenda items highlighted by its President, namely, the contribution of women, youth and civil society to the

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post-2015 development agenda and human rights and the rule of law in that agenda.

The deadline for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to which the Republic of Serbia fully subscribes, is fast approaching, and the United Nations and today's world are at a crossroads. The process that has been initiated is an ambitious and complicated one. Even the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex), entitled "The future we want", makes it incumbent upon us to take action.

I hope that the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals will be a success. The Republic of Serbia appreciates the opportunity given to it, as a member of the Group, to help in the drafting process aimed at establishing sustainable development goals. For our part, we will do our utmost to contribute to defining sustainable development goals in clear terms. We believe that the sustainable development goals should be global in nature but, at the same time, have the capacity to be implemented in all countries, as countries differ so much in their capacity, level of development, priorities and policies.

It goes without saying that, in identifying the sustainable development goals, priority should be accorded to energy efficiency, renewable resources and climate change. Key development goals should deal with sustainable economic development because, without it, it will be impossible to achieve social development, reduce hunger, poverty, unemployment and inequality, prevent further wage level disparities or protect the environment.

I expect that attention will also be focused on implementing a global mechanism to prevent economic shocks from developed countries from spilling over to developing countries and destabilizing international financial markets. As part of the process, voices from both "have" and "have-not" countries should be equally valued. Developing countries should highlight the problems, and developed countries should act as partners in resolving them.

As a new member of the Economic and Social Council for the period 2014 to 2016, the Republic of Serbia will participate in all Council activities related to the MDGs and setting the stage of the post-2015 development agenda. However, there can be no development — sustainable, unsustainable, economic or social — in war-torn areas.

Even today, at the outset of the twenty-first century, it is unfortunate that many war zones exist throughout the world. My country has participated in United Nations-led peacekeeping operations for decades. In many continents, memories of Serbia's contributions to peace efforts remain very much alive.

We will continue to apply lessons learned to find solutions to specific problems in the field and to improve our peacekeepers' response capacities in terms of the challenges they will face in carrying out their mandates and with a view to achieving maximum performance.

Serbian service and police personnel are engaged in multinational operations in the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia, Uganda, the Middle East and Somali waters and soon in Mali as well. They all serve as proper representatives of their country through actions in favour of peace.

We are prepared to increase, in the coming period, the size of our contribution and equipment in terms of national contingents and to make use of the available United Nations standby arrangements. In line with our policies based on Security Council resolutions, we will also promote the participation of our servicewomen in peace missions.

Serbia's engagement in United Nations missions and other multinational operations represents our firm contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. The Republic of Serbia has no ulterior motive behind sending its troops to other countries, other than to provide assistance. For that reason, we would like to see the personnel of the Serbian armed forces and the Ministry of the Interior welcomed and accepted both by the Governments of the friendly countries to which they are deployed and the local populations and that they would be seen as supportive partners, rather than as foreign troops and occupying forces.

When seconding its personnel to multinational operations, Serbia has no interest — military, political or economic — but to help a friend in need and show the other contingents contributing to the operation that our troops may be counted upon to help.

Apart from wars, there is another omnipresent global danger looming large over the core values of the

United Nations. That danger is terrorism, which poses a threat to fundamental human rights and creates an obstacle to business, thus undermining development as well.

As a State party to most international counter-terrorism conventions, the Republic of Serbia attaches great significance to international activities aimed at suppressing terrorism. And we are adapting our domestic legislation to stem the scourge. We unequivocally support the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and all of the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Serbia, as a victim of terrorist attacks that have even taken the lives of children — the most innocent segment of its population — understands well the need for regional and broader counter-terrorism cooperation. Because terrorism knows no boundaries, States Members of the United Nations must be ready to cooperate without compromise, prejudice, or limitations and without any exceptions or special cases allowing terrorist actions against one's own people under the pretext of so-called "freedom fighting".

In that context, it is of the utmost importance to make progress on the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. Serbia strongly condemns terrorism in any shape or form, without regard to who the perpetrators may be, wherever such acts may be committed or for whatever purpose.

On the other hand, no one has the right, Serbia included, to limit itself to statements made in condemnation. Victims of terrorist acts worldwide, those injured in attacks or the families of victims have the right to demand that persons responsible for such acts be brought to justice and that any further recruitment of terrorists or financing of their organizations end.

The Republic of Serbia attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights and is striving to fully comply with the internationally recognized standards in that area. Serbia has taken a step forward regarding the enjoyment of human rights by minority groups, particularly national minorities, women and children and persons with special needs.

Serbia's law on the protection of the rights and freedoms of national minorities surpasses international conventions in many aspects. The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia unambiguously prohibits the assimilation of national minorities and the undertaking of measures designed to artificially alter the ethnic structure of populations in areas where national minorities traditionally reside in large numbers.

The Republic of Serbia is a multi-ethnic, multireligious and multicultural country. Dozens of ethnic groups and several religious communities live there peacefully, and its tradition of living side by side based on tolerance and respect of others has been long, genuine and deep-rooted. Drawing upon our own experience, we have wholeheartedly embraced the Alliance of Civilizations initiative. We have actively promoted intercultural and interfaith dialogue in all domains and at all levels, as that is the best way to overcome divisions caused by cultural, linguistic, religious or any other diversity.

Generally, in the period under review, Serbia has achieved considerable progress in the protection of human rights, as noted in the presentation of the second universal periodic review, in Geneva in January, and during the visit to Belgrade by Ms. Navanethem Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are ready to share our expertise and experience in the human rights field with our friends around the world. The Republic of Serbia considers such cooperation a friendly exchange, not interference in the internal affairs of other countries or as one-sided and irresponsible preaching and tutelage accompanied by conditions or blackmail.

The Republic of Serbia is a party to nearly all international instruments and initiatives in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. It fully complies with the obligations it has undertaken. Serbia's commitment to the Arms Trade Treaty, which we recently signed, is based on the belief that the establishment of legally binding international standards in that field is a significant contribution to eliminating the illegal arms trade, fighting international terrorism and organized crime and promoting peace, security and stability — in other words, the alleviation of human suffering.

In accordance with its agreed commitments, my country has counted and inventoried all weapons in its possession and has made the information available. It has also allowed the inspection of its arsenals. Our partners know where each piece of Serbian weaponry is located. Nothing is kept secret. We have done so not only because we were bound to do so, but to show and prove that Serbia is truly committed to peace and cooperation with its neighbours.

Contributions to peace can also be made through disarmament. Never in its history has Serbia fought a war of aggression, and the weapons now in its possession are only meant for its defence. Furthermore, Serbia has never posed a threat to any country. It has never possessed weapons of mass destruction and has no intention of including weapons of mass destruction in its visible, quantifiable and verifiable arsenal.

We are aware that progress on disarmament and arms control hinges not only on us. Success is related to developments carried out on a wider political and strategic stage.

In the little more than one year since I took office, I have visited almost all of the countries with borders in common with Serbia. I have spoken with the leaders of all of the neighbouring countries, including at international events. In that manner, I wanted to convey the message that Serbia has opted for regional cooperation and working together with its neighbours to address the problems we share in common.

On behalf of Serbia, I have made symbolic gestures to effectively demonstrate that we wish to reconcile with the peoples living side by side with us. I am confident that those gestures will significantly contribute to reconciliation and help to right the wrongs of the past. We are now looking forward to the future. It is our desire to foster good relations with all neighbouring countries by building a network of roads, railway lines and bridges; to try to make our mark on the international market; to promote our energy systems; to protect the environment; to cooperate in disaster relief; to develop cross-border projects; to have trade links and; to expand our cultural, scientific, educational, technological and sports cooperation. Our common goal is to improve the living standards of everyone living in the countries of the region.

In comparison with our neighbours, we can compete only in terms of seeking to attain more human rights protection, whereas in all other respects, we will cooperate and help encourage one another to perform better. Serbia's message to its European partners is that the time for conflicts, distrust and disputes is now behind us. Our country is looking forward to the future and to becoming a member of the European Union. It has been decided, and we trust that Serbia will start negotiations with the European Union no later than January 2014. I hope that Serbia will be able to inform the next General Assembly session about the outcome of those talks, which we believe will not last long or continue indefinitely, as well as about Serbia's ongoing progress towards becoming a fully fledged member of the European Union. At the same time, Serbia has revived old alliances and forged new ones throughout the world, creating strategic partnerships with countries in the East, West, North and South.

Serbia has been active in all regional initiatives and organizations, and has recently chaired some of them, making a remarkable impression on other members. As a result, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has entrusted Serbia with its chairmanship for 2015. The OSCE chairmanship, to be held by Switzerland in 2014 and then by Serbia in 2015, serves as a good example of how to cooperate within international organizations. It will give Serbia an opportunity to make a constructive contribution to the enhancement of the OSCE, especially since 2015 will mark the fortieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, one of the most important OSCE instruments. We are confident that our activities on regional initiatives and our forthcoming chairmanship of the OSCE will make Serbia an ideal candidate for taking on greater responsibility within the United Nations system, consequently making it possible for it to be entrusted with even more responsibilities and duties, when the time comes.

The unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo, in 2008, has been creating problems and undermining a system established by the United Nations at its start. The United Nations has never recognized an illegal secession attempt by Kosovo's provisional institutions of self-governance, but a number of countries, irrespective of the norms of international law, have recognized Kosovo as an independent State. Under constant pressure and through blackmail on the part of large and powerful States, some other countries, including Serbia's traditional allies, have unfortunately recognized Kosovo as an independent State.

Serbia has responded to such acts in a measured, diplomatic and political manner, refraining from any use of force, to safeguard its sovereignty and its territorial integrity. Faced with a situation where its vital national interests were at stake, a country would rarely demonstrate such a degree of level-headedness.

We are convinced that such problems, including the status of Kosovo and Metohija, should be resolved peacefully. For that reason, we take heed of calls by the General Assembly in 2010 to start negotiations with representatives of the authorities in Pristina. Following

the efforts of Lady Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, we have made arrangements with the Albanians of Kosovo and Metohija. Serbia has thus shown that its intention was to protect the Serb community in Kosovo and Metohija as far as possible, to ensure that all its inhabitants in the southern Serbian province of Kosovo could also lead normal lives on a day-to-day basis.

Let us underscore that Belgrade and Pristina have only reached agreement over clearly defined matters, such as local elections and the establishment of a community of Serbian boroughs in Kosovo and Metohija, and that the Republic of Serbia has not recognized the independence of Kosovo in any shape or form. The first agreement, which we promised to respect fully, does not mean in any way that the Republic of Serbia intends to approve Kosovo's entry into the United Nations and other international organizations, where membership is the sole prerogative of sovereign States.

The United Nations has been present in Kosovo and Metohija for more than 14 years. We believe in the United Nations, which was entrusted with administering this part of Serbia in 1999. Therefore, we ask that the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) remain unchanged, that its staff not be downsized and that its activities be reinforced. UNMIK plays an indispensable role. It should coordinate the work of all international forces present in Kosovo and Metohija within a neutral framework, as stated in Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). That resolution defined the tasks of the United Nations and reaffirmed that Kosovo and Metohija is a province forming an integral part of the Republic of Serbia.

We also support the work of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). We request that the European Union respect its own principles as far as the province of Kosovo and Metohija is concerned. We expect EULEX, by maintaining a neutral approach, to continue assisting in the development of democratic institutions within the province and in monitoring the human rights of Serbs and other non-Albanians, since only their fundamental human rights are under threat.

As far as Serbia is concerned, there is yet another pending task before the United Nations weighing on the conscience of its Member States, one which must not remain unaddressed, so that neither we nor future Presidents have to seek justice by repeating that a crime remains to be resolved. We wish to recall that special rapporteur Dick Marty, a Swiss senator, has shown, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has confirmed, that some Albanian leaders in Kosovo and Metohija organized the kidnapping and killing of Serbs whose organs were then harvested and sold illegally. We were not in a position to initiate legal proceedings for those crimes, which were committed towards the beginning of the twenty-first century, crimes that have so far not occurred anywhere else in the world. We still believe that it is necessary for the United Nations to be included in investigating those crimes, based on a report by the Council of Europe. Serbia appeals for the support of friends in its efforts to shed light on the truth behind those and other crimes so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice.

In April, I spoke before the Assembly in the thematic debate on the role of the international criminal justice system in reconciliation and about the work of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 (ICTY). We said then that the ICTY had abused the mandate given to it by the Security Council: that it had not helped the reconciliation process in the territory of the former Yugoslavia; that it had compromised the idea behind the international criminal justice system; that it had acted under political pressure; that it was not independent; that it had acted differently in similar circumstances; that it had acquitted some war criminals, in some instances even failing to indict them; that it had humiliated Serb victims of the secession wars of the former Yugoslavia; and that it had attempted to paint a revisionist picture of history. We continue to hold the same points of view.

By accepting the integrity of the Tribunal, we have not only earned the right to criticize its work but also to propose a solution. Nevertheless, while its intention was not just to criticize this institution, Serbia suggested certain measures that might, to some extent, help redress the wrongdoings of the Tribunal. We request the United Nations and the ICTY to find a legal solution that ensures that Serb convicts are sent to serve their prison sentence in Serbia, so that justice may be done more effectively, primarily as a way of helping them reintegrate into society. That does not mean that we challenge the verdicts reached or that we are minimizing the crimes committed by those persons. We simply want to help those concerned return to normal life, once they come out of prison, as part of the Serbian community.

Serbia respects every State Member of the United Nations and offers each and every one of them its friendship and trust. We expect that to be reciprocated in equal measure. The Serbia of today and tomorrow deserves to be trusted.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Deby Itno (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate the new President of the General Assembly, Mr. John Ashe, his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the work they have carried out since the previous session.

The theme of this session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", is very much at the heart of our concerns. The 2015 deadline we have set for ourselves will soon be upon us. The general impression is that a number of countries continue to fall short in terms of funding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), official development assistance and debt relief. It is unfortunate to note that all of the commitments made to boost economies and development efforts have not achieved the expected results, despite major international mobilization.

There is a strong possibility that the 2015 deadline will fall well short of many countries' expectations, especially in Africa — since poverty persists, despite the development and implementation of national poverty eradication strategies. That is why — drawing on lessons learned from the shortfalls in setting and implementing the MDGs — the African continent intends to establish a post-2015 development agenda that is capable of meeting its expectations and it calls upon the international community to support it.

On top of the development challenges come other security challenges. New hotspots and wars are emerging all over the continent. Coupled with that, the terrorism phenomenon has taken a heavy toll, as was the case earlier in Mali and now in Kenya.

Terrorism is a scourge that knows no borders. It feeds off of the blood of the poor, spreading its recruitment tools of ignorance, poverty and fanaticism. No good can ever come from violence carried out against peaceful populations while using supposed religious considerations or doctrines as a pretext. Such violence is totally contrary to the principles of international law, in terms of human rights and the right to freedom of religion and opinion. Our profound belief is that the fight against terrorism must continue to the last breath, in order to curb proliferation and eradicate it definitively.

Chad, for its part, has made its strategic choice. It has decided to make its modest contribution to the establishment of peace, security and stability wherever necessary. That fundamental position is the key motivation of its candidature for non-permanent membership in the Security Council for the period 2014-2015. To that end, my country expects friendly, active and enthusiastic support from the Assembly, to encourage its valiant people to continue to provide their utmost effort in supporting the cause of international peace and security, which are indispensible to establishing a world based on stability, development and democracy.

Since restoring its stability, Chad has remained mindful of all crisis situations in Africa and in the world. It intends to fully cooperate with the United Nations on all positive initiatives aimed at peace and security, wherever the need may arise.

My country provided a clear indication of its unshakeable resolve through efforts with the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) in the eastern part of Chad, from 2008 to 2010 protecting Sudanese refugees from Darfur and Chadian internally displaced persons and ensuring the security of humanitarian personnel and associated United Nations personnel.

True to its philosophy, Chad sent the largest armed contingent to Mali, with more than 2,000 men, and 900 to the Central African Republic. Some 1,800 Chadian soldiers will join the new United Nations force in Mali. Chadian peacekeepers are now present in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti as part of United Nations peacekeeping missions.

We take this solemn opportunity to formally commend the successful completion of the transition process in Mali, with the holding of free, regular democratic elections unanimously hailed by the entire international community. Our wish is for that fraternal country to restore peace, unity and stability so that its sons and daughters can focus their energies and intelligence on progress and the well-being of the population.

However, the situation in the Central African Republic remains alarming. The insecurity and the political, economic and financial difficulties that continue to face the transitional Government represent major challenges of concern to everyone. The countries of the region, through the Economic Community of Central African States, have made their utmost effort to mobilize military, financial and human resources to support peace and security in that country.

I wish to welcome the establishment of the Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine, of which the Central Africa Multinational Force comprises the core. Its troop level will increase from 2,000 to 3,600, thanks to the participation of Central African States and other friendly countries that have shown an interest in joining that noble cause. In spite of all those efforts, we must recognize that the needs on the ground clearly highlight the need for swift intervention, admittedly in the spirit of regional solidarity but also with the vital support of the international community. To that end, we expect the Security Council to adopt a firm resolution that provides for logistical and financial support modalities for the mission.

Turning to the Sudan, as the Assembly knows, we signed a peace accord on 15 January 2010 and established a joint force that has allowed us to stabilize our common borders. As a result, my country will continue to actively strive for peace in the Sudan, as a member of the follow-up committee for the Darfur Peace Agreement.

Nevertheless, I think it would be timely to draw the attention of the Assembly to the humanitarian situation in Darfur as a result of the new hotbeds of tension that are emerging and which lead to a constant flow of other refugees and internally displaced persons towards eastern Chad. Currently, there are more than 400,000 refugees and 200,000 internally displaced persons, compared to 290,000 and 180,000 in past years. All efforts made since the outbreak of that crisis to foster the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their regions of origin have been in vain thus far. It is our duty to advocate from this rostrum for the energetic pursuit of assistance from the international community to all those people as political and ethnic tensions continue to divert them from their path to return.

Chad condemns the rampant instability in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge the Government and the members of the rebellion to reach a negotiated solution to their dispute to allow that great African country to focus on its development.

Our profound belief is that the solution to all the crises I have just listed cannot be military. A lasting, definitive solution to the ills that are hobbling the development of Africa requires a constant struggle against poverty, marginalization and youth unemployment. It also requires the establishment of constructive dialogue among the various sectors of a country, on the one hand, and permanent dialogue among different cultures and religions, on the other.

Addressing the situation outside Africa, I must first mention the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which persists and for which the international community has not yet found the appropriate solutions. We urge and encourage the efforts made by the Organization and the United States Government to conclude a peace agreement that allows for the peaceful coexistence of two sovereign States.

The situation in Syria troubles us all since it has reached a particularly grave stage. We have no right to allow a whole people to be cast adrift. The use of chemical weapons, which marks a dramatic escalation of the civil war in that country, is an affront to the human conscience and to the ideals present at the birth of the Organization. While welcoming the agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation on the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, my country wants to see the perpetrators of those crimes identified and brought to an international tribunal.

However, we are greatly saddened to see Syria tear itself apart and Syrians killing each other. The international community must do its utmost to stop that tragedy.

Allow me to turn to Cuba. The embargo against Cuba, which has been in place for decades, unjustly penalizes that country. We call for the lifting of the embargo in order to allow the country to resume the place it deserves in the comity of nations.

At the national level, Chad, which has definitively turned the painful page of wars and divisions, is now fully devoted to its development by exploiting its mineral and energy resources through daring strategies. To do that, it has just adopted a national development plan that will soon be the subject of a round table on its funding and implementation. At the political level, we give pride of place to dialogue. We have established a permanent political dialogue framework that brings together the majority and the opposition and has the power, inter alia, to create structures for the organization of future elections. With the assistance of Chad's partners, in particular the United Nations, we have taken all the necessary steps to prevent and put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate a major concern for my country. It is our ardent wish to finally see the long-awaited reform in the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. That reform, which has become an issue of justice and equity, is a top priority for Africa. Keeping Africa, as well as other key actors on the international scene, outside that universal forum appears shocking today to hundreds of millions of human beings throughout the world. The awakening of the peoples of Africa, the role of the continent in the world and its indispensable contribution to preventing and settling conflict means that our continent can no longer be sidelined from the prestigious institution that is the Security Council.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Chad for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kagame: Thirteen years ago, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established humanitarian principles for the twenty-first century. Together, Member States and international organizations stood for the idea that the world's poorest nations and poorest people should not have to live without dignity and hope.

The world is a different place now. We have witnessed the struggles of a global economy reeling from a financial crisis and, indeed, a recession. But we have seen a billion people lifted out of poverty, more children in schools, greater care for the sick. And we have observed a generation born in a new age of information, ready to embrace ever-expanding frontiers of technology.

But the transformative effect is not yet complete. The list of shortcomings is as long as that of the successes, and as we think about the theme of "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", we must have the courage to go beyond business as usual. The report of the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, has laid out an ambitious vision for the future, and I congratulate the eminent persons who worked to produce it.

But together we must now take an honest look at the MDGs, determine what worked and what did not, and commit to forging a new global partnership founded on mutual responsibility and trust. That will require developing nations to take greater ownership of the post-2015 agenda. One of the failings of aid has been the lack of attention to country-specific context in agreements. So now is the time for the developing world to make its voice heard in order to shape the debate and ensure that policies and programmes are demand-driven.

It will also require Governments to empower those whose lives we are trying to transform, to give them a

stake in the process and a say in their countries' progress. In Rwanda, we have found that empowering local leaders while demanding accountability is an effective catalyst of development. But for decentralization to work, the centre must remain stable. That is why we continue to place such emphasis on good governance. It has inspired trust in our institutions and been a foundation for our development. We know it is the best way to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

There must also be a far greater focus on the role of the private sector and recognition of its power to create prosperity. For that, we need a global environment without trade barriers and one that facilitates investment in infrastructure. Greater investment is particularly needed in roads, railways and airports in order to connect domestic markets to regional and global ones. Investment is also needed in energy. Electricity, something taken so much for granted in the developed world, is still a luxury for far too many people and businesses. Access to knowledge, information and technology will also play an important role. It is levelling the economic playing field for developing countries and is beginning to break the cycle of poverty.

Post-2015 presents an opportunity to turn that new sense of possibility into a reality, to give people in developing nations increased opportunity. In Rwanda we are on course to meet all the MDG targets, but for us they are the floor, not the ceiling. We remain tireless in our pursuit of progress, because we know all too well the cost of failure. Next April, Rwanda will commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the genocide. Over three long months, flickers of life went out all over the country, but today Rwandans are standing strong, having overcome adversity. In building a new nation, we have a purpose that is shaped by a tragic past but focused firmly on the future. And as within the larger African and world community we move towards the next chapter of global development, we must create strong and meaningful partnerships that have a positive impact on the lives of all. Together, we can make sure that the post-2015 era is defined by opportunity and optimism, prosperity and progress, dignity and hope.

On another issue of critical importance, Africans supported the global consensus against impunity and the creation of an international justice system to fight it. We did so on the understanding that such a system would promote peace and security within and between nations, and that it would uphold the principle of the equal sovereignty of nations. In practice, however, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has flouted those principles. It has shown an open bias against Africans. Instead of promoting justice and peace, it has undermined reconciliation efforts and helped to humiliate Africans and leaders, as well as serving the political interests of the powerful.

Nowhere have the shortcomings of the ICC been more evident than in the ongoing trial of Kenyan leaders. The people of Kenya have shown their eagerness to heal the wounds of their past, reconcile and move on. That is why they elected the current leaders who are on trial. Those efforts to reconcile their communities and move forward should be supported, and development of the national judicial capacity to fight impunity should be promoted rather than undermined.

The General Assembly and the Security Council should be examining this matter as well as the wider issues of universal jurisdiction that have already been brought before them. That is the least we can do to uphold the principles of justice and the equality of nations, support reconciliation processes and respect the dignity of Africans.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: I bring warm greetings from the people of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am privileged to once again address this Assembly.

I would like to take the opportunity to echo the sentiments conveyed by previous speakers in congratulating Ambassador John W. Ashe on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. We are indeed very proud to have a brother from the small island developing States presiding over this session. I am confident that under his able stewardship of the Assembly will continue its work towards improving security and quality of life for all members of our global community, in particular the most vulnerable. Let me also take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the leadership of his predecessor, Mr Vuk Jeremić.

I also commend the untiring commitment and work of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has been an able navigator on this journey, steering the United Nations through the diverse and complex realities and the myriad challenges facing our peoples and nations. On behalf of the people of my country and our region, I wish to reiterate our deep gratitude for his personal commitment to the issue of climate change and the plight of the most vulnerable. Our people still remember with fondness the Secretary-General's visit to Kiribati in 2011, which was particularly significant in that it was the first visit to our country and region by the head of the United Nations. I am also heartened and humbled to hear that his visit brought home to him the stark realities of the challenges facing our people, living as we are on the front line of climate change.

As we gather again in New York for this session, the problems are perhaps greater today than they were a year ago. Security challenges posed by climate change, conflicts, terrorism, transnational organized crime and other threats continue to undermine our efforts to achieve sustainable development, peace and security for our global community. In the past few weeks, we have seen heartbreaking events unfold here in the United States, in Syria, in Pakistan, in Kenya and in other parts of the world, giving ample evidence of the growing security threats to our peoples from within our own societies. We commiserate and join in prayer with the families of all those affected by those barbaric and terrorist acts.

The ongoing work of the United Nations, and the work awaiting us at this session, reflect these challenges, and the President has appropriately selected the theme "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage" for our discussions this week. Kiribati welcomes the theme. We believe that it provides an opportunity for us to reflect on what we have done and achieved as individuals, as leaders of our countries, and together as a global body entrusted with making the world a more peaceful, secure and better place for everyone. We must continue to ask ourselves if what we are doing is in the best interests of all our people, or of just a select few. We must examine our efforts as leaders of this global family and ask ourselves if we are doing the right thing for our children and their children, whose future rests in our hands and depends on our decisions.

This is the eighth time I have had the honour to address this Assembly in my ten years as President, and on each occasion I have sought to convey the same message. On each occasion, I have spoken of the real and existential threat to my nation posed by climate change and sea-level rise, and I have called for urgent action to ensure the long-term survival of countries like mine. Last year (see A/67/PV.11), I said that I would continue to speak of the peril confronting my country for as long as I have breath in my body.

Well, I am still breathing and the peril remains. It is a critical issue for the survival of our people and indeed for all of humankind. Many of us here today are parents, and even grandparents. I myself have 10 grandchildren. Surely the world that we want to leave to our grandchildren should be better than the one we inherited. But we are not on course to achieve that. In fact, we are disastrously off course. The scientists tell us — as I am sure they will again reaffirm in their next assessment report — that calamity awaits, and not just for those of us on low-lying islands. What we are experiencing now on these low-lying atoll islands is an early warning of what will happen further down the line. No one will be spared.

We cannot continue to abuse our planet in the same old way. To shape the future we want for our children and grandchildren, we need leadership, we need commitment, we need action — now. When we all return home to our children and grandchildren, we must be able to look them in the eye and tell them with confidence that we have done all that is humanly possible to combat the devastating consequences of climate change.

We are grateful to the General Assembly for acknowledging that climate change is a matter that

warrants the attention of the Security Council. I applaud the commitment of our Secretary-General to that specific security threat and particularly welcome his recent announcement to convene a high-level climate summit at approximately this time next year. It will be the most significant such event since the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009.

But the Secretary-General cannot mobilize the remedy needed on his own. He will need the support of all nations to ensure that the action necessary to address climate change is taken. We must step up our national and collective efforts to mitigate global greenhouse gas emissions. We must urge major greenhouse gas emitters to do their part. We must also call with urgency on our development partners to assist in our efforts to deal with the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise now being experienced in our countries, and in our efforts to prepare our people for an uncertain future.

The delivery of international adaptation finance and resources is taking much too long. We cannot continue to stand on the sidelines and wait for others to deliver. In Kiribati, we are taking charge of our situation and moving forward with our mitigation and adaptation strategies. We have finalized a national adaptation framework and are now working directly with our partners on it. Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan and the World Bank are working with us to implement our national adaptation priorities.

While we are taking adaptation measures to ensure that Kiribati remains habitable for as long as possible, prudence demands that we prepare for the future of our people. We are looking to improve the skills of our people to a level where they are able to exercise the option of migrating, to be able to migrate with dignity.

When it comes to the Millennium Development Goals, our situation has not changed much since I last spoke before this body. We are on track on some of the Goals, but we continue to be off track on most. This, I believe, should not come as a surprise, as most of the limited resources we have continue to be diverted from equally pressing priorities to fighting the onslaught of the rising seas and storm surges and their impact on our water supplies, homes, livelihoods and public infrastructure. This is a costly exercise, one we cannot afford but that is necessary. We will continue to rely on the support and goodwill of our partners and members of our global family in that regard.

As we prepare for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in Samoa in 2014, the special needs of the most vulnerable low-lying small States, like Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Maldives and Tuvalu, must be highlighted, for how can we meaningfully discuss sustainable development goals when a disproportionate amount of our time and scarce resources are focused on ensuring the survival of our people?

For us, the ocean is a double-edged sword. Sea-level rise threatens the very survival of our people. But the ocean is also an integral part of our lives and provides daily subsistence for our people. It can and should be a ticket to freedom from dependency on others. We are a nation of water. We own substantial fishery resources. The annual total catch in our waters is valued at some $400 million. Yet as owners, we receive only 8 per cent of that sum. Where is the equity, where is the justice in this?

We believe that this must change. Our objective must be to maximize the returns from those resources, and we have started in that direction with the establishment of our first fish-processing plant through a public-private partnership. We invite our partners to join us in that endeavour. I am convinced that, given the right support, we can achieve sustainable development by utilizing the available resources of our vast exclusive economic zone. Through this approach, we can reduce our reliance on external assistance. I believe that if we are provided with the support we now need to develop our capacity to harvest and process our own resources, we will also be better able to build our climate-change resilience.

The ocean is the next frontier in the pursuit of sustainable development. While we have failed to protect our land and atmosphere from our human demands, we must make sure that the ocean does not meet with the same fate.

In June last year, we met in Rio de Janeiro to review our progress 20 years on from the 1992 Earth Summit. Unfortunately, our track record in delivering on our undertakings has not been good. In fact, in many respects, our environment is worse off today than it was 21 years ago.We renewed our commitment in Rio to achieving the future we want, but we need to move beyond commitments and to act. The future we want will require this Organization to restructure and realign itself to reflect the realities of our time: a time in which

new and emerging security threats, such as climate change, climate variability, sea-level rise and ocean acidification, are challenging the international system of governance; a time in which the future survival of some nations is seriously in question; a time when all those countries with the ability to do so must contribute to the prevention of this calamity or be forever judged by history.

Business as usual can no longer be considered an option. Let us not limit ourselves to working within the boundaries of our comfort zones. Let us be inclusive rather than exclusive. We must listen to civil society, our youth and women's groups and allow those with the ability to make a contribution to join in the global dialogue and action to address these major challenges.

In that regard, we welcome the continued resolve of the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly to accelerate action on the reform of our Organization, to ensure the highest level of global collaboration, accountability and decisive action, and to inspire a greater sense of urgency on issues of critical concern to our global community.

We also welcome the inclusion of Taiwan in the international processes of the World Health Assembly. We hope that a similar inclusive approach will prevail in respect of other international institutions and processes, so that Taiwan, and others currently excluded, can participate and contribute meaningfully for the good of humankind.

Resolution 66/288 calls for a frank assessment of our global decision-making structure. It requires bold but rational political commitment on a global scale. As leaders of our global family, we must be brutally honest in accepting the fact that unless we act now to shape the future we want for our children and their children's children, the prospects for success will be bleak. As we chart the path towards the future we want, we must address the fundamental threats to the security and very existence of the members of this family of nations. Once again I call on all of us to ask ourselves the question, "Whose interests are we pursuing? Are we here to secure the future of each other's children or just our own?" This is the greatest moral challenge facing us today.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Komorowski (*spoke in Polish; English text provided the delegation*): First of all, I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. John Ashe for his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

In one month's time, it will have been 70 years since the Foreign Ministers of the four major Powers agreed to set up a universal organization dedicated to ensuring international peace and security. In Moscow, in 1943, high representatives of the United States, the Soviet Union, China and the United Kingdom took that decision in the very midst of the most devastating war in human history. They knew that maintaining peace and the creed of "war no more" required harmonious and concerted international cooperation. They knew that it required collaboration among the great Powers and respect for the principles of international law, as well as the building of infrastructure for peace. The declaration published back then rightly spoke of the need to act for justice among nations. That is important, because it is from injustice or from the sense of a lack of justice that many conflicts, both internal and international, have originated and continue to originate.

On the eve of that anniversary, it is worth examining to what extent the international community copes with threats to peace and with open-ended, prolonged disputes. The Organization and its States Members are right to be satisfied with the body of work produced since then to help maintain security and peace. The

United Nations has proven to be an instrument that, since the Second World War, has made international relations more civilized in very many areas, not just in relations among countries but also within them. Understandably, the world is still far from ideal, but we should not lose heart. A better world is possible, and we should not lose sight of that. That is the real ideal outlined in the Charter of the United Nations, and it is a duty that belongs to all of us, the Members of the Organization.

The justified satisfaction with the progress made, which was ensured with the aid of the United Nations and enjoyed by the whole of humankind, cannot hide the weaknesses of the Organization and its ineffectiveness in situations it was set up to resolve.

One such current situation is the civil war in Syria. That conflict has led to a large number of victims and has created a major humanitarian crisis. It is a threat to regional security and stability. In such situations, Members of the Organization are authorized to demand efficient action by the Security Council. That is a justified expectation of ours based on Article 24 of the Charter. Regrettably, we must conclude that in the Syrian dispute, members of the Security Council have spoken out for individual sides in the war and supported them in various ways, rather than make the parties stop fighting and commit to peace talks. That has revealed the lack of capacity and efficiency of the decision-making mechanisms of the United Nations.

Thisis all the more reason not to procrastinate or wait for another anniversary as a pretext to return to our efforts to reform the Security Council in a way that would also bolster its authority, legitimacy, representativeness and effectiveness. We are talking about a more systemic solution that would not limit the Security Council but would go beyond the Council by reinforcing its representativeness. We are thinking today about the significance of the original principle of the right to veto of the Security Council's permanent members, in the light not just of current or future challenges but also of the changes in the global international order, which are unfolding before our very eyes. It would be beneficial if the discussion about those issues could follow a formula similar to the one that proved successful prior to the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization, which brought about a rather ambitious reform agenda for the Organization, some of which found its way into the World Summit Outcome adopted by Member States in 2005 (resolution 60/1). Poland was an active participant in that work and intends to continue its engagement for further necessary reforms.

The Syrian tragedy, including the use of chemical weapons, is symbolic of a broader phenomenon — the ignoring of international values, norms and obligations adopted by the Organization and the entire international community. After all, they should apply to everybody to the same degree, with no one set outside or above them. Too often, the immediate national interests of countries have the upper hand. That leads to tragic consequences in terms of human rights and humanitarian issues, including the principle of the responsibility to protect, for which we had such high hopes when it was adopted in 2005.

Armed conflicts are an extreme manifestation of the mass violation of human rights. The tragic development of the situation in Syria, which has claimed more than 100,000 victims by now, could have been prevented, especially if the Security Council had adopted the necessary decisions early enough. Therefore, the solution of the difficult, complex and interrelated problems of the Middle East entails a comprehensive, imaginative and impartial approach.

Mr. Sinhaseni (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In a context where everyone is focused on security issues — including new, non-traditional ones, and where the dominant concerns are the economy, crisis mitigation, the fight for growth and competitiveness, competition for markets and land that could provide valuable raw materials for economic development — we cannot forget about human rights. Recently, many actors in the international arena have failed to care about them. But is it possible for us to ignore them, when, for instance, the violations are too close to genocide?

Let me remind the Assembly that this year, on 9 December, we will be celebrating the sixty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was, by the way, initiated and drafted by the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin. The message from his research and initiatives, which started in Warsaw in the early 1930s, is as follows: we must be alert and sensitive to the symptoms of future violations of human rights; it is our duty to respond to them and not just show moral outrage.

As the effectiveness of the response depends on international cooperation, the United Nations is to be

a centre for such international cooperation. The United Nations is the best, and often the only, such centre. We must not allow the instruments for the protection of human rights developed by the United Nations to be eroded. Their effectiveness will depend upon whether we remain united, and not just in name. It is necessary to establish a mechanism that would, in an objective and uncontroversial manner, force harmonious cooperation between the permanent members of the Security Council in the face of situations that fall under the principle of the responsibility to protect, in order to ensure that the prevention of such crimes and the effective response to them prevail over individual geopolitical interests.

The practice of exploiting children in armed conflicts is particularly saddening and causes a lot of outcry. The fact that many Governments tolerate such practices and that the Organization, despite existing conventions and protocols, is unable to do more in this area is unacceptable. Let me remind the Assembly that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was also developed on Poland's initiative. For children, their safety, development and rights, it is the family that matters most. Looking at the family and its role in society makes us aware of how much the family means when it comes to respecting human rights. We are particularly sensitive to that in Poland.

What in many countries is a tangible but slight deficit in the exercise of economic and social rights, while in many others it is poverty and chronic underdevelopment. Poverty and underdevelopment are not just human rights issues and factors that undermine the dignity of the individual and entire social groups. They are also the reason that individuals and nations are unable to ensure survival on their own, or to fulfil their creative potential for their own benefit and that of humankind. That is why international efforts aimed at helping regions and countries that suffer poverty and are constantly underdeveloped are so important for them to be able to take the path of sustainable growth and stop being chronically dependent upon external assistance. First and foremost, however, that is necessary so that fundamental human rights are respected and local residents regain their sense of dignity in order for their inherent potential to serve the development and enrich the diversity of the human civilization.

Those objectives will be served by the climate negotiations that Poland is going to chair when the nineteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change takes place in November.

We know in Poland that just one single generation can be enough to make unbelievable progress. When communism fell in 1989, Poland was a poor country, economically ruined and badly indebted. It needed international aid, not in the form of non-repayable borrowing but debt relief and restructuring, technical and training assistance, access to markets of better developed countries and foreign investment.

Coupled with the hard-working nature and entrepreneurial spirit of the Poles, that has all borne fruit in abundance. Since then, our gross domestic product has increased by approximately 400 per cent, while our emissions have dropped by more than 30 per cent, as compared with the baseline year. That attests to the fact that it is possible and realistic to achieve economic growth while curbing the growth of harmful emissions.

Obviously, we are aware that there is no single formula for everyone and no single path to sustainable growth. There are different baseline circumstances, environments and cultural and geographical conditions. The Polish example, however, and that of other post-Communist countries, should be considered in other regions of the globe.

The same is true for the European development model of the European Union, which strives to combine democracy and human freedom, economic competitiveness, social justice and solidarity. It is not about being Eurocentric. It is an experience most appreciated by those who come to Europe from the furthest parts of the world and want to stay there. Do not be misled by the economic crisis in the European Union, which most countries in the Union are already beginning to overcome. The European development model remains universally attractive.

Our experience also suggests that even the most generous foreign assistance will not replace efforts made internally by a country. It is frequently an indispensable precondition, yet is insufficient in itself. Internal efforts and factors — the freedom and empowerment of individuals, economic freedom and the stability of the State — always form the foundation.

Good governance is another important aspect of successfully pursuing sustainable growth, as it combines democracy, self-government, human rights,

competence, a lack of corruption and the primacy of the interest of the country as a whole over particular interests, whether they are political or economic. The entire notion of good governance is spelled out in a resolution of the Human Rights Commission initiated by Poland in the late 1990s. Only with good governance in place can international aid bring about desirable results in combating poverty and taking the route of sustainable growth.

Poland is an active participant in the international community, and not just through its bilateral relations and membership regional organizations such as the European Union, or supra-regional ones such as NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We are also trying to create a better international order by being active in the United Nations. Poland, an unflinching believer in the purposes and principles of the United Nations, is convinced that it is necessary to respect the treaties and commitments made by the Organization — by us — and supports institutions and programmes that facilitate their implementation.

For years, one of the priorities of our policy has been the promotion of human rights and democracy. Poland currently holds the presidency of the Human Rights Council. The European Endowment for Democracy was established on Poland's initiative as well. Our country's share in development aid is growing, particularly within the European Union. Next November, Warsaw will host the climate summit, where we will preside over the most important development process, namely, that of climate-related negotiations.

Poland has always been active in efforts aimed at ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly chemical weapons. Drawing on our experience and rich relations with other countries, we wish to continue to contribute to reinforcing international peace and security. That is why we are seeking a seat on the Security Council for the period 2018-2019. We believe that as a member of the Security Council, we will be able to help achieve the purposes and principles of the United Nations, as well as represent the interests of Member States in line with the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Poland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mswati: It is a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to join my fellow Heads of State and Government at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We wish to offer our profound congratulations and support to the President of the Assembly. We also wish to express the Kingdom's sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his entire staff for their efforts and the role they continue to play in improving the working mechanisms of the United Nations and for being such a good host.

The United Nations has brought hope to those who are suffering, which is one of the pillars of its Charter. The fundamental purpose of the United Nations is to promote tolerance among humankind so that nations can live together in peace with one another. We are pleased that the United Nations has always worked hard to promote and maintain international security, and it has further taken positive action to prevent and remove threats to the peace that humankind so desires. We are also cognizant of the fact that humankind is facing a test of unprecedented proportions in hotspots that continue to pose a huge challenge for the United Nations to address.

We have been deeply saddened by the senseless killing of innocent people that took place this week in Nairobi. We condemn such acts of terrorism in the strongest terms. We send words of comfort to the Government and the families who lost loved ones through that tragic and senseless violence. The world needs to stand together and wipe terrorism from the

face of the universe. We call upon those who support such activities to cease from doing so forthwith.

We are also extremely disturbed by the deadly conflicts in countries such as Syria, where innocent people including women and children, are dying on both sides, with some displaced now living as refugees in other countries. We encourage all of the people of Syria to immediately cease fire and use dialogue as a means of solving their differences, because using the barrel of a gun to settle a score will not help them; instead, it will leave the Syrian people divided and not seeing eye to eye. Infrastructure and social services will be destroyed, leaving increased problems that will have devastating effects for a very long time to come. We trust they will soon find a peaceful resolution to their crisis.

The findings of the United Nations mission on the use of chemical weapons in Syria should be used as a basis to chart a way forward in pursuit of the dismantling of these unconventional weapons of mass destruction, which pose a serious threat to humankind. As long as chemical weapons continue to exist in that country, it remains at risk of similar attacks, where nobody will own up to them. Therefore, it is only proper that the dismantling process begin with immediate effect to prevent a similar attack in the future.

It is important that whatever action takes place in Syria, it must fall within the mandate of the United Nations. The United Nations must act quickly on those issues and take a leading role in making sure that those episodes where life is lost through the use of such weapons are prevented.

It is important for leaders and Governments to maintain contact and be in constant consultation with their people at all times to avoid situations where leaders do not understand the aspirations of their people. It is imperative to create forums where people will have access to Government to express themselves, because a lack of such communication and detachment leads to either Governments or the people reacting in a violent manner towards the other.

The domino effect of such situations can lead to an international crisis, as the problems of one country can easily spiral into problems for others, which may need to intervene. Such strife causes countries, as well as the United Nations, to divert resources from the objectives of socioeconomic development and channel them towards financing conflict situations instead of the welfare of the people.

The Kingdom of eSwatini is committed to a process of consultation with the people at the People's Parliament — Sibaya — and other dialogue forums. That practice is democratic and participatory in that everybody is involved in key decision-making processes.

Before I came to attend the General Assembly, the Kingdom of eSwatini held a very successful and peaceful election, which proved to be one of the most successful we have had over the years. Some 40 per cent of the Swaziland population were eligible to vote, and 70 per cent of them registered to do so in the elections. The primary and secondary elections were also very peaceful, free and fair, without any undue influence.

In the past, there had been only one day of voting, but this year we had to extend voting for two days during the primary and secondary elections. Our elections embrace our traditions and culture, whereby people from communities nominate people in their chiefdoms to compete at constituency level, which we call Tinkhundla. The winners then go straight to Parliament as a direct representation.

As a result, the people are happy to be part of the Government formulation process, because they can claim ownership of the people who constitute the Government of the day. It is in that vein that we trust that the new parliamentarians will work very well with the people in shaping the future of the Kingdom of eSwatini, with a view to meeting their aspirations and attaining the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.

We also note with interest the increased number of observers in this year's election. Regional and international observers were highly impressed with our elections. We therefore call upon the world to embrace our system.

We are aware of the fact that many countries do not understand how our system of government works. We are happy to define our system as a monarchial democracy. Monarchial democracy is defined as a marriage between the monarchy and the ballot box. The ballot box represents the will of the people. The people provide advice and counsel to the King, and that ensures transparency and accountability. It is a combination of power and empowerment. It means that

the monarchy of eSwatini guarantees the continuity of stability, and the democracy of eSwatini guarantees the shared power of the people.

Therefore, the monarchy is married to the trust of the people, who believe that the King does everything in their best interests. It is home-grown; it easily accords with the norms and values of the Swazis and is therefore easily understood by all Swazis.

To those who proclaim that democracy is the answer to all nations and their development, we present ourselves as testimony of a new democratic ideology that works. It has a place in modern-day democracy, and it complies with all structures of the United Nations family. The Kingdom of eSwatini is committed to the ideals of the United Nations just as much as it is dedicated to protecting its history, its legacy and its dignity, while at the same time embracing the opportunities and possibilities for cooperation within the community of nations.

It is therefore the Kingdom of eSwatini's position that it believes in democracy as an idea, but not as an ideal, because things that are ideal to some may not be ideal to others. The Kingdom of eSwatini will, however, continue to embrace the opportunities, the technologies and the mechanisms that create a modern society.

Our ultimate goal is to have achieved first-world status by 2022, or at least visible signs that we are heading in that direction socially, economically and otherwise. In the past five years, significant progress has been made in the Kingdom towards poverty eradication, improving the health of our people, and infrastructure and agricultural development. We are confident that we will see much more progress in the next few years.

The kingdom of eSwatini has been implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which became effective in 2000 and most of which have a target date of 2015. Good progress has been made in the areas of education, gender, the empowerment of women and malaria control. Although the country has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the other Millennium Goals, there is still a need to accelerate efforts to address the issues of poverty, HIV and AIDS, infant mortality and maternal health.

In order to solicit views on the post-2015 development agenda, the Kingdom of eSwatini embarked on an intensive consultative process. It involved a cross-spectrum of stakeholders, including traditional leaders, young people, women, men, the business community, people with disabilities, faith-based organizations, civil society organizations and different regiments.

On the goal of eradicating poverty, the nation agreed that poverty was still a challenge and that greater efforts were needed to address it. The poor performance of the economy in recent years due to the global financial crisis has contributed to the situation, and therefore a great deal still needs to be done in that regard.

As to providing quality education and lifelong learning, the country has made significant progress towards achieving universal primary education. However, there is a need to focus, with the support of the private sector, on the quality of education and to introduce more vocational skills.

The Government has invested significantly in the health sector. However, the burden of disease continues to exist; hence that goal remains very relevant for the people of eSwatini. The country is still faced with the problem of HIV/AIDS, and therefore, in the post-2015 development agenda, the pressure to address the scourge as well as other, non-communicable diseases should be maintained.

Ensuring food security and good nutrition remains a priority and should feature prominently in the post-2015 development agenda. However, the issue of climate change continues to be a drawback to many of our developing countries. Our food production has been seriously affected by climate-change patterns and the related challenges.

The provision of adequate financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and technical assistance to developing countries are critical if we are to achieve our global objectives. We therefore appeal to our developed partners to honour the pledges they have made to the Green Fund and the sustainable development programme as a matter of priority. We strongly believe that this could add the required impetus in the context of our objective of increasing food production.

The goal of achieving universal access to water and sanitation is also important for the people of eSwatini, since water is a very basic requirement for agricultural and industrial production, as well as for domestic use. Remarkable progress has been made in the area of supplying potable water to households; coverage has reached 71 per cent nationally.

The creation of jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth is critical for the development of any country and is linked to the goal of ending poverty. Emphasis should be put on value addition, technology transfer and the development of entrepreneurial skills, particularly for young people. As a country, Swaziland is fully behind the post-2015 agenda, because it remains a guideline for the international community in working together for the sustainable development of our respective countries.

The issue of the reform of the Security Council remains a top priority for the African continent. We are calling for a Council that will give equal opportunities to all regions of the world to voice their opinions as an international family on issues regarding global conflict. We believe our proposal is just and fair so that as a region Africa can have a voice in the affairs of the Council as equal partners in this global Organization.

The United Nations should continue to play its advocacy role to ensure humankind continues to live peacefully with each other. All nations around the world should be given equal opportunities to share their expertise and experiences with the Organization.

The Kingdom of eSwatini is happy to note that, with solid international support and cross-Strait developments, the Republic of China on Taiwan has increased its meaningful participation in United Nations specialized agencies and mechanisms. We will continue to encourage positive interaction in the international arena between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Finally, I hope that this session will come up with the desired results and tangible targets. We also look forward to a post-2015 agenda that will create a conducive landscape for all humankind to live in.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Georgia.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saakashvili: It is a great honour to once again represent my beloved nation at this rostrum. During the past decade, when I have had the privilege to address the Hall, Georgia has moved from a failed State to a market democracy. We have experienced both advances and setbacks, both breakthroughs and mistakes. But the world has been able to witness my nation's constant commitment to freedom. I ask members today once again to hear the voice of a nation that transcends political, social and religious differences in a common love for freedom — a voice that, despite all the problems we have encountered and the challenges we still have to overcome, is full of hope. Looking at our world today, I think that this voice of hope is needed.

The optimism of the early 1990s, when the spread of liberal and democratic values seemed natural, when the end of history had been proclaimed, and when the United Nations was set to become the heart and the soul of a world finally at peace, the optimism of that era — noticeable when I was a student in New York and visited the United Nations as an intern — was then crushed by a wave of pessimism and cynicism.

The world is not at peace. Humankind has not reconciled with itself, and the United Nations did not become the heart and soul of a united globe. Western civilization, once triumphant, is now trying to tackle a deep economic, social, and spiritual crisis. In Eastern Europe the colour revolutions are challenged by the very forces they defeated a few years ago. In the Middle East the glorious images of cheering crowds in Cairo and Tunis have been replaced by the horrendous videos of the gassed children of Damascus.

There are many good reasons to be disillusioned. But should the untrammelled optimism of the 1990s be replaced by an equally untrammelled pessimism, by a sense of resignation that stifles hope? Should the fact that the expansion of democracy and freedom turns out to require profound struggle cause us to renounce our beliefs and our principles?

I have come here today to share the hopes on behalf of my nation and to speak out on behalf of my Georgian people against such pervasive fatalism. I came here to address those who doubt, those who hesitate and those who are tempted to give in.

If the West is an anachronism, why do millions of Poles, Czechs, Estonians, Romanians and others cherish so much the day they entered NATO? Why are millions of Ukrainians, Georgians, Moldovans and others desperately knocking on the doors of the European Union?

If freedom is no longer fashionable, how do we explain that the suicide of a previously unknown citizen in a remote Tunisian town has changed the map of the world? No, history did not come to an end in 1989 or 1991, as was proclaimed, and it never will. Freedom is still its driving force and its goal. Everywhere, men and women who want to live in freedom are confronted by the forces of tyranny. The question is: are we going to be actors or spectators in that confrontation?

As I speak, the Eastern European countries aspiring to join the European family of free and democratic nations are facing constant pressures and threats. Armenia has been cornered and forced to sign a customs union that is not in that nation's interest or in those of our region. Moldova is being blockaded. Ukraine is under constant attack. Azerbaijan faces extraordinary pressure. And Georgia is occupied. Why? Because an old empire is trying to reclaim its bygone borders. "Borders" is actually not the right word, since that empire — be it the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, or the Eurasian Union — never had borders. It had only margins.

I came today to speak in the name of those margins. Unlike most nations, the Russian Federation has no interest in having stable States around it. Neighbouring countries in constant turmoil is what the Kremlin is seeking. It rejects the very idea of strong Governments in Georgia, Ukraine or Moldova, even ones that try to be friendly to its interests. I was never a great fan of what the French call "la langue de bois". But, as my second term nears its end, I feel the urge more than heretofore to speak my mind. Let us be very concrete.

Do members think that Vladimir Putin wants Armenia to decisively triumph over Azerbaijan, for instance? No. That would make Armenia too strong and potentially too independent. Do members think then that the contrary is true, that Moscow wants Baku to prevail over Yerevan? Obviously not. The current rise of a modernized, dynamic Azerbaijan is a nightmare for Russian leaders. No, they do not want anyone to prevail. The conflict itself is their objective, since it keeps both nations dependent and blocks their integration into the European common space.

Do members think that the electoral defeat of the forces that led the Orange Revolution in Ukraine has led the Kremlin to take a softer approach to that country? On the contrary. I spoke yesterday to my colleague Viktor Yanukovych. His Government is under constant attack and pressure from Russia. That is what is happening on a daily basis, again ahead of the European summit in Vilnius. Russian officials now speak openly about dismembering that nation. I just heard the speech two days ago.

Do members think that the Kremlin would agree to discuss the de-occupation of our regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, now that the Government has changed in Tbilisi? Far from it. The annexation of Georgian lands by Russian troops continues. Yesterday, the occupants again expelled Georgian citizens from their houses and are destroying their villages, homes and the houses of their parents and grandparents. In daylight, they are taking over their cemeteries and water systems with total impunity.

Despite the friendly statements made by the new Georgian Government in recent weeks and months, the Russian military continues to advance its position, dividing communities with new barbed wire, threatening our economy, moving towards the vital Baku-Supsa pipeline, approaching closer and closer to the main highway of Georgia, and thus putting into question the very sustainability of our country.

We are one of very few nations in history — of which I am very proud — that has, unfortunately, sustained a full-blown attack by Russia. We are the only one, in many centuries, whose statehood and independence have survived, despite a full-blown attack by the more than 100,000-strong Russian army, despite being bombed by 200 planes and attacked by the full Russian Black Sea fleet and tens of thousands of mercenaries. Our statehood and independence have survived despite all of those things. But let us not now risk losing any of that in a time of peace. We have survived because were united; we survived because the world was with us. I hope that the world will remain with us when that pressure is on us.

I have come here, in the name of the Georgian people, to ask the international community to react strongly to the aggression and to help us to put an end to the Russian annexation of our lands. The hostility of Vladimir Putin and his team towards the Government that I have had the privilege to lead for almost a decade has not been based on personal hatred or cultural misunderstanding. Any such interpretation was just a smokescreen.

My predecessor, President Shevardnadze, came from the highest-level Soviet nomenklatura. He was returned to power in Georgia with direct Russian help in the 1990s, through a military coup. He was well known for his Soviet diplomatic skills — unlike me. And yet, Russia constantly undermined his authority and even tried to assassinate him several times.

It is not about Gamsakhurdia — the first President of Georgia — Shevardnadze, Saakashvili, or the present Prime Minister Ivanishvili. Those names actually do not matter when the stakes are so high. This is about the possibility — or lack — of true statehood in Georgia and beyond. Why? Because the current Russian authorities know perfectly well that as soon as strong institutions are built in Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova or in any other place — as soon as functioning States emerge — such institutions, such States will reflect and enforce the will of their people, which is to become fully independent and move towards Europe.

The Georgian experience of successful reforms and the creation of a functioning State was therefore considered to be a virus — one that could and would contaminate the whole post-Soviet region. We became the least corrupt country in Europe, the world's number-one reformer — according to the World Bank — one of the top places for business and the least criminal country in Europe, after having been one of the most criminal. That was the virus that should be eliminated by every means possible.

That is why the Georgian nation has suffered an embargo, a war, an invasion and an occupation — all since 2006. But it is also why the resistance of the Georgian people and the resilience of the Georgian democracy are of the utmost importance for the whole region.

The efforts to roll back the advances of the European Union and of NATO in our region — progress based on the will of our people — are becoming ever more intense. Those efforts have a name: the Eurasian Union. It makes me sick when KGB officer Vladimir Putin lectures the world about freedom, values and democracy. That is the least of the things he can do for the world, as the dictatorial leader of one of the last empires left. But that new project is much more dangerous than his lectures. The Eurasian Union has been shaped as an alternative to the European Union, and unveiled by Vladimir Putin as the main project of his new presidency — a new Russian empire.

Because European and Euro-Atlantic integration take a lot of time and require tremendous effort; because there are moments when one might think one is pursuing a mirage; and because the threats are becoming so strong, the pressure so direct, while the promises seem so far away — some people in our region might fall victim to fatigue and ask themselves, "Why not?". Today, I want precisely to explore that "why not?".

Much more than with a choice of foreign policy or of international alliances, our nations are confronted with a choice of society, a choice of life. Our people have to decide whether they accept to live in a world of fear and crime: a world in which differences are perceived as threats and minorities as punching bags; a world in which opponents are faced with selective justice or beatings; a world that we in our region all know very well, as do those in some other regions of the world, since this is the world from which we originate.

The Eurasian Union is both our recent past and the future shaped for us by some ex-KGB officers in Moscow. On the opposite side, our revived traditions and our centuries-old aspirations have led us towards another world called Europe.

European societies are far from perfect — we all know that. There too, one can have fears, doubts, angers, hatreds and social inequality. But there, at the same time, meritocracy prevails over nepotism, tolerance is a fundamental of public life and current opponents are the future ministers, and not prisoners to be or enemies to beat.

The choice, when it is expressed in that way, is so obvious for the people of our region that some Kremlin strategists — they call themselves "polito-technologists" — have decided to cancel the truth and have shaped lies that they are spreading throughout Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and many other places. Their mouthpieces in our respective countries — that conscious or unconscious so-called

fifth column — identify the European Union with the destruction of family values, the erosion of national traditions and the promotion of gays and lesbians, undermining our traditional religions.

Strangely, in recent years, and even more so in recent months, we hear in Tbilisi, Kiev and Chisinau the same ugly music that was first orchestrated in Moscow. We hear that our traditions are collapsing under the influence of the West, that Christian holidays will be replaced by gay pride events and churches by a multicultural Disneyland. We hear that our Orthodox identity is under threat. And after all of that, we hear that we share with our former masters a common respect for decency and traditions.

Are we so naive as to believe the lies of Putin and the others, as other generations have done, allowing our sovereignty to be kidnapped? Are we so unfair to our ancestors to think that their memory would be honoured by attacks on mosques or by pogroms? Are we so unaware of our own history that we allow it to repeat itself endlessly?

When we hear the fake music of the orthodox brotherhood sung by Russian imperialists, can we not hear the true voice of Patriarch Kirion, who was assassinated, or the eternal voice of the Patriarch Ambrosi Khelaya, who was tortured for days and weeks only because he appealed to the Geneva Conference against the invasion of his country? He told his Russian interrogators, "You can have my body, my flesh, but you will never have my soul." Are we so deaf as not to hear the voices of the bishops and priests tortured and killed by Russian imperialists and Russian communists? Are we so uneducated that we do not recall who has repainted our churches and erased our sacred frescos? Are we so blind today not to see the destruction of our churches by the same people who erased our churches in the nineteenth century — Russians who are now in the occupied territory?

We need to know our history. Our history teaches us that tolerance is the basis for sovereignty in our region. It is not only a moral duty; it is an issue of national security. We need to know our history to understand that the same old imperialistic principle — divide and rule — is being applied today as it was two centuries ago.

Looking at our region today, those who have some knowledge of Caucasian history might remember the Armenian-Azerbaijani bloodshed of 1905, directly created by the tsarist Administration; compare it to the beginning of the conflict in Karabakh in the late 1980s. The Russian army was present there, in large numbers. In front of its eyes, the war started and they pretended to help both sides, but in fact stirred up the conflict.

They might recall — as I do too well — the beginning of the war in the Georgia region of Abkhazia in the early 1990s, when Georgian paramilitary groups were getting their weapons from the same Russian troops who were actually leading, directing and assisting the Abkhaz militia and bombing Georgian territory and bringing in Chechen mercenaries in order to kill any form of solidarity between nations of the North and the South Caucasus. They did so just as they sent — for the same reason, more than one century before — Georgian officers to the front line of their wars against the Chechens, Ingush and Dagestanis.

We could also look at other margins throughout the times. We could look at Poland or Ukraine, and we would see the same pictures. Everywhere it reached, the Empire inflamed the relations between subjugated peoples and separated them by a wall of fanatic antagonism. Unfortunately, it used to work. But what is even more unfortunate is that it is still working today.

The European Union, the greatest political success of recent decades, has been built on three pillars, which could be characterized as three rejections — the rejection of the extreme nationalists who had led Europe to the collective suicide of two world wars and the horrors of nazism; the rejection of communism, which was threatening to be spread throughout the continent and the world; and, finally, the rejection of colonialism and imperialism. It took time — and many participants today, as victims of French imperialism or British imperialism, remember it well and painfully — for the French and British Empires to accept that third rejection. But giving up their colonies was the price they had to pay for the modernization of their economies and the development of their democracies. It was also the price to pay for European unification to become fully realized.

The Eurasian Union is based on the exact opposite premise. It is fuelled by intolerance, it is lead by old structures of the KGB, and it is designed to revive an old empire. That is what the Eurasian Union is all about. Of course, joining the Eurasian Union is very easy. There are no social, economic or political criteria to be met; becoming a colony, in fact, requires no effort at all.

Passivity, mediocrity, the absence of national pride and a willingness to be enslaved are the only requirements.

On the other hand, to form a real union there is no alternative but to make a herculean effort and meet exact criteria, because principles are precisely what create a union. To those who doubt, therefore, I say that it is precisely because the European Union demands effort and imposes criteria for joining — because the European Union does not seek to absorb us while the Eurasian Union dreams of absorption — that the choice should be obvious.

But there is an even better reason for saying that the choice is obvious. The choice is obvious because the Russian project is doomed to fail. No empire is sustainable today; we are living in the twenty-first century. It is certainly not the Russian century, and the Russian Empire is the last, anachronistic empire in the world. If we look back at history, France and the United Kingdom lost their colonies not only because the colonies fought for their independence, but also because people in Paris and London ultimately did not believe in their empire anymore.

Exactly the same thing is happening in Russia nowadays. The imperial dream is being rejected first, as we have seen, at its margins. But, most crucially, perhaps, the idea of the Empire is rejected at its very centre. Such a rejection does not manifest itself in public protests alone or in the rising polls of the opposition in the main cities of Russia. It expresses itself in the universal cynicism of Russian elites towards Putin's Eurasian vision. The very people who are supposed to serve it do not believe in the viability of the project.

Rejected at its margins, rejected at its centre, the imperialistic path will come to a dead end, the Eurasian Union will fail, and Russia will in the end become a nation State with borders, instead of margins — a real country with real borders. Then it will start to seek stable relations with stable neighbours. Then cooperation will replace confrontation.

It will happen, and much sooner than people think, to the benefit of the margins, but most of all to the benefit of the Russian people themselves.

It will happen because the imperial project has become absurd for a generation of Russian citizens who are among the world's most enthusiastic users of the Internet.

It will happen because ethnic discrimination in Russia is being used in its territories, but it will not make Russia a stronger and more united State.

It will happen because the endless resources provided by the revenues of oil and gas are challenged by the perspectives offered by the exploitation of shale gas and shale oil. The shale gas revolution is really undermining the last authoritarian empire in the world.

It will happen because gas alone does not replace economic modernization.

It will happen because of corruption and the absence of justice.

It will happen because entire regions have been alienated by discrimination and violence — because the people of Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and many other places have been so persecuted that they do not feel part of any common project with the central authorities in Moscow.

It will happen because the frustrations, angers and hatreds are too strong to bear and the unifying ideal is too absent.

It will happen, not in the coming decades but in the coming years. A few years from now, the Assembly will recall my words. Vladimir Putin will have left the Kremlin and vanished from Russian politics, even if he says that he will be there for another 20 years or more. Russian citizens will remember him as a ghost from the old times — from the times of corruption and oppression.

Nobody knows whether the process will be calm or violent, whether his successor will be nationalistic or liberal, or both together, but what matters is something else — Russia will no longer be an empire. It will become, finally, a normal nation State. That is the horizon we should all prepare for together.

Meanwhile, as our region remains an area of confrontation, the formerly captive nations should unite their strengths instead of cultivating their divisions. Some leaders and some countries in the past understood that the freedom of one was dependent on the freedom of all the other subjugated nations, like Poland, which for many centuries dreamed of uniting all persecuted people, or like the Poland of Marshal Pilsudski, which invited all the oppressed people or their officers to unite under the flag of Polish independence and Polish military forces. But never did

our ancestors benefitefrom a force that was vast and powerful enough, that understood its strategic interest was to preserve the sovereignty of each of our nations. Today that force exists; it is, with all its deficiencies, the European Union.

As we come closer to the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit, I would like to reiterate a call that I have made several times in the recent years. By launching the Eastern Partnership as a response to the 2008 invasion of Georgia, the European Union has offered to our nations a platform for us to cooperate under its benevolent umbrella. We should invest much more in it. We should develop common projects, first and foremost focusing on the necessary reforms that we should carry out together, because reforms mean for all of us statehood and independence.

Russian Empress Catherine II knew it well. When Poland started to successfully implement an ambitious programme of reforms based on precepts from the French and British Enlightenments despite Russian attempts to counter those reforms, she wrote a long and secret letter to the German Emperor, Frederick the Great of Prussia. The letter was and remains one of the most impressive expressions of the nature and strategy of the imperialistic project. It states that the ongoing reforms were dangerous for both Russia and Prussia because they would turn Poland into a true State, that the reforms needed to be stopped and that Poland should be attacked and dismembered before reforms were fully implemented so that it never needed to be occupied again.

The letter will not sound unfamiliar to those who know how much Vladimir Putin loathed the Georgian experience during the past decade. Many Russians were asking, if the once-corrupt Georgia, a criminal country, a mafia-ridden country, considered to be a failed country, could succeed, why is it that Russia cannot succeed? It was an ideologically dangerous project. For the first time, an efficient nation State was being built in the Caucasus, and the reforms had to be crushed before they could bear all their fruits.

Unity should be our rule in Eastern Europe, including in the divided Caucasus. I have spoken about the beginnings of the war in Abkhazia. I could have recalled an older scene that symbolically characterizes the history of the Caucasus. It was at the end of the rebellion led by Shamil, the great imam of the Northern Caucasus, against the Russian Empire, after Shamil had surrendered and after the last Chechen leader still fighting, Baysongour, had been wounded and captured. As Baysongour was going to be hanged, the Russian officers brought together a crowd of Dagestani men to witness the execution. They ordered one of them to remove the chair on which Baysongour was standing in order to execute him. The Russians knew what they were doing — they hoped to fuel the local vendettas and oppose the people, which is an old tradition in the Caucasus. Seeing that, the valiant commander Baysongour moved the chair himself, committing a suicide forbidden under all religions, including Islam, and preserving the relations between neighbours.

Despite that one failure, how many times has the strategy of dividing neighbours encountered success among the nations of the Caucasus? It needs to come to an end. That is why I have launched several projects during my presidency to reinforce the people-to-people contacts between North and South Caucasus, projects focusing mostly on education and on university exchange. That is why the Georgian Parliament has recognized the genocide of the Cherkezian people — one of the least known and tragic pages of the history of the world, when an entire nation was wiped because their land was needed by the Russian Empire.

We need to build on those efforts. We need to prepare for the time when the Empire collapses, so that its legacy of hatred is swiftly overcome. And we, as citizens of Georgia, need to prepare for the time when Russian troops will leave our occupied regions, when Moscow will withdraw from Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, Abkhazia. We need to prepare ourselves to welcome back our Ossetian and Abkhaz fellow citizens as brothers and sisters and not as enemies. We need to prepare for the time when hundreds of thousands, in fact, more than half a million, internally displaced Georgians and members of other ethnic groups return to their deserted homes, because that time will come much sooner than we think.

As my second term nears its end, I take pride in Georgia's many accomplishments during my tenure. We ushered Georgia out of a state of darkness, introduced unprecedented transparency into our public service, put our children back in school and got rid of the gangs. We have brought our nation closer than ever before to its European dream and worked tirelessly to renew the spirit of tolerance that guided Georgia in our glorious past.

We did many good things, but like any leader — and when I became President, I was then the youngest president in the world — I realize that some things were done at a very high cost because of lack of experience. In our rush to impose a new reality against the background of internal and external threats, we cut corners and certainly made mistakes. At times we went too far and at other times not far enough. I fully acknowledge my responsibility in that regard, and I sincerely feel for all those who believe that they did not benefit enough from our work, or even that they were victims of our radical methods.

I want to tell all Georgian citizens — those who supported our project, our policies and our party and those who rejected them — how proud I am of their maturity. We promised them this project, but we did not promise them that it would be smooth going. We were very ambitious, and that was because our people were so mature and so brave. I want to tell them from this rostrum how humble I feel in the light of the sacrifices and the efforts they made.

We are and should remain a nation united in a common love for freedom and dignity. We are and should remain a nation united in the deepest respect for the sacrifices made by our soldiers, a nation sharing the same sorrow when they lose their lives - in Afghanistan, for instance - and taking the same pride in their bravery. We are a nation that is proud of our soldiers, who stood up to a force of Russian invaders one hundred times the size of our contingent, and gave us and the world time to mobilize and to protect and save our independence — something that, with all due respect, many much bigger and more powerful nations could not do in the twentieth century. We are and we should remain a nation united in our historical identity and our desire to join the European family of democratic nations, the family we should never have been separated from in the first place, our family. The path of the Georgian people towards freedom, regional unity and European integration is far from over, and I will continue to dedicate every day of my life to its success, as a proud citizen of a proud nation.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mori: I am pleased to join previous speakers in congratulating the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I thank our outgoing President for his excellent leadership. Allow me also to extend my respect and gratitude to the Secretary-General for his untiring commitment to the mission and ideals of the United Nations.

Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the international community has supported the principle that the best form of development is one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Since that time, however, production and consumption patterns have become increasingly unsustainable, driven primarily by a desire to develop economies at any cost. The Federated States of Micronesia has therefore proposed the following approach to global development beyond 2015.

First, any post-2015 development agenda must move beyond addressing basic human needs and focus on sustainable development. Secondly, in order to ensure that sustainable development is carried out in a dynamic and inclusive manner, the post-2015 development agenda must honour the environmental, economic and social pillars that make up sustainable development. Finally, international cooperation and assistance are crucial to fostering sustainable development globally. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have posed significant challenges. We continue to look to the international community for

assistance to overcome those challenges as we develop the sustainable development goals.

As this body considers a post-2015 development agenda, let us not forget one important point: development and the environment are inseparable. No country can develop its economy without degrading its natural environment to some significant degree. While society strives for economic progress, the natural environment that sustained our ancestors through thousands of years has come under attack.

Climate change is, without question, the gravest threat to my people's welfare, livelihood and general security. It is the survival issue of our time. Our sustainable development is threatened by the harmful effects of excessive greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, the effects of which poison our root crops, destroy our reef systems and drive many of our people from their ancestral homes. All of us, developed and developing countries alike, have a stake in finding ways that minimize man-made damage to Mother Earth.

Only the international community can effectively take up that cause. To that end, the comprehensive climate change treaty planned for adoption in 2015 must impose legally binding commitments. These commitments must reflect a level of ambition far higher than under the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. Pre-2020 mitigation action must also be ambitious enough to close the emissions gap.

I reiterate the hope that the world will address the dangerous growth of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by phasing down those chemicals under the Montreal Protocol. Micronesia was the first to submit an innovative proposal in this regard. We welcome the newly announced agreement between China and the United States to phase down HFCs. We also welcome similar developments around the globe. Achieving a phase-down of HFCs under the Protocol will build confidence and momentum for significant action on climate change in the future.

Another notable contribution is the Majuro Declaration for Climate Leaderhip, under which every Pacific Island Forum leader pledged to strengthen their country's efforts to fight climate change.

As we move towards the post-2015 development agenda, let us not lose sight of the enormous importance of the world's oceans. We call for the establishment of a sustainable development goal on healthy, productive and resilient oceans. In turn, we should expect a greater share of the benefits from the world's oceans. Let me stress the central role that the effective management of all fisheries must play in sustainable management. Bycatch and, particularly, discarded bycatch threaten effective fisheries management. This is a serious conservation problem, because valuable living resources are wasted. Moreover, it threatens our food security and nutrition needs.

Similarly, we agree that it is essential to include the goal of sustainable energy for all in the sustainable development goals that are under discussion here in New York. The transition to sustainable energy places a huge fiscal burden on our national accounts. I commend Tonga for spearheading the Pacific Regional Data Repository for Sustainable Energy for All.

The Federated States of Micronesia looks to the international community for economic cooperation and support. With limited resources, we have undertaken some bold initiatives.

First, we operate under a nationwide integrated disaster risk management and climate change policy that mainstreams climate change into our primary governmental and economic decision-making processes. This policy places special emphasis on strengthening the application of traditional knowledge of ancient conservation practices, which are threatened by sea-level rise, ocean acidification and other effects of excess global greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, our legislative branch recently ratified the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol. We will soon submit the instrument of ratification.

Secondly, we have taken significant steps in conserving our limited land and fragile marine ecosystems through the Micronesia Challenge. We have undertaken this Challenge because our nation is made of many small low-lying atolls. Our people are wise stewards of our land and sea, working with the environment to provide sustenance for us all. As the preamble to our Constitution says,

> "The seas bring us together, they do not separate us, our islands sustain us, our island nation enlarges us and makes us stronger... Our ancestors who made their homes on these islands displaced no other people. We, who remain, wish no other home than this."

Thirdly, we recently adopted a national policy that aims to ensure a sustainable energy supply and

an environmentally sound energy policy. Historically, Micronesia has imported all of its energy in the form of fossil fuels. We have begun to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. There are already a number of renewable energy projects up and running in many parts of my country, thanks to the assistance of our generous development partners. My country has adopted very ambitious targets in this regard.

In order to continue implementing our national development policies, we call on the major donor States to honour their official development assistance (ODA) target of seven tenths of a per cent of gross national income by 2015. We look forward to the discussion in the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. Technical assistance as a component of ODA is also crucial, particularly in the form of appropriate technology transfers and capacity-building initiatives.

Sustainable development must be supported by all of its pillars — not just economic and environmental concerns, but also social considerations. Our people are our most valuable assets. Therefore, we are tailoring an approach that is inclusive of all our people, with special attention to the circumstances of our women, youth, the elderly and disabled persons. Their advancement must be mainstreamed into our discussion on a post-2015 development agenda.

Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and heart and kidney diseases continue to be a challenge. We must address them through the sustainable development goals. This is a global crisis, demanding a global solution. If not controlled, it could undermine sustainable development and degrade the quality of life of our people.

We welcome the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development (A/68/PV.3) that took place two days ago. I was impressed by the achievements of the speakers and their inspirational leadership in this forum. We support the outcome document (resolution 68/3) of the High-level Meeting.

The Federated States of Micronesia places a high priority on the harnessing of advanced information and communication technologies for our socioeconomic development, especially in the areas of distance education, health, and natural disaster early warning. We thank the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for the assistance that they have offered to improve our telecommunications and to enable our country to obtain fibre optics. We also welcome cooperation and support from the International Telecommunication Union and our development partners.

Human trafficking continues to be a serious crime, affecting all nations and causing untold human misery and economic harm. My country is striving to protect its population from this scourge. We support the efforts of the United Nations to stop human trafficking, and we hope to implement the United Nations Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking in all forms in Micronesia. The ongoing tragedy caused by human trafficking demands that it be prioritized and addressed by the entire international community.

The global development agenda will be shaped by the launching of the sustainable development goals in 2015. Many processes will influence the selection and monitoring of those goals, including the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which has now been replaced by the high-level political forum. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of the new forum, which will take on the monitoring of the implementation of sustainable development commitments. These are outlined in the Barbados Program of Action, the Mauritius Strategy and the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288).

The second event that will shape the sustainable development agenda is the comprehensive climate change treaty, whose adoption is planned for 2015, and for which we support ambitious, binding commitments. Thirdly, preparations for the Third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in September 2014 in Apia, Samoa, are now under way. Micronesia and other small island developing States recognize the international community's goodwill and renewed willingness to help our countries address our priorities and challenges.

Fourthly, I would also like to commend the Secretary-General for his vision and support of the wide range of issues so critical to small island developing States. His advocacy for next year's high-level summit on climate change and his focus on climate change themes will generate the political momentum for a post-2015 development agenda to guide all stakeholders.

We recognize the central role that reliable data plays in government planning and the crucial need for capacity-building, which must keep pace with the changing dynamics of basic governance in the

international landscape. The remoteness of our islands, limited national capacities, and the complex requirements of the United Nations make our development efforts even more difficult and expensive. We therefore look to the specialized United Nations agencies for urgent assistance.

Mr. Arias (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair

In closing, let me express my sympathy and solidarity with those people around the world who are facing immediate threats to their survival. I am horrified by the killing of innocents, especially women and children, in Syria and elsewhere. We in our peaceful islands condemn violence. But what can a small island nation in the Pacific do? What can any country, large or small, do? The answer, we believe, can be found only within our Organization. The world in which we live is too interdependent for us to stand aside while generations of internal conflict harden into unending hatred and bloodshed. We are all stakeholders. We must put an end to the senseless killings around the world. I call upon this Organization to employ its collective will to pursue the ideals of our Charter. I know in my heart that the goal is achievable. The future we want is enduring peace and prosperity for our world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.